



Parents FLAG Edmonton

APRIL & MAY 1995

NEXT MEETING:

TUESDAY, MAY 16, '95

@ 7:30 pm

Gay & Lesbian Community Ctr.
Rm 104, 11745 Jasper Ave.

Everyone welcome! For further
info please phone Lynne at [REDACTED]
or phone Cindy at [REDACTED]

Coffee and juice will be served.

SOMETHING NEW! Please find
enclosed our new Speakers Bureau
pamphlet. On the cover is the new
PFLAG symbol now being used
internationally. On the inside is a
special symbol representing our
speakers bureau and designed by
Calgary PFLAGer, Gail Allen.
Many thanks, Gail! We hope this
symbol will come to be recognized
throughout Alberta and beyond as
we reach out to other parents of
lesbians, bisexuals and gays.

PFLAG Edmonton's focus has the
following three aspects:

- * **Support** - in an adverse society;
- * **Education** - to enlighten an ill-informed public; and

LOVE
IN ACTION
JOY IN DIVERSITY

* **Advocacy** - to ensure equal civil
rights.

FOCUS: SUPPORT

A MOTHER'S STORY!

When I discovered that my son was
gay, and after the initial shock
wore off, by biggest concern was
that now I would have to teach him
how to cook. Little did I realize
how much he had to teach me.

I raised my daughter in a way that
would prepare her to live her life
married to a man. I tried to prepare

my son for the life of being married
to a woman, and now I find out
that at 19 years old my son is
experiencing a life that I was never
able to prepare him for. This is one
aspect of his life that I cannot give
him advice based on my own
experiences or wisdom.

Having been raised without
prejudice and enjoying a relatively
good status in life, I never believed
I would become a part of one of the
most unpopular minorities in the
world. My attitude always was that
it is OK to be homosexual, as long
as they leave me out of it. Then my
son took me by the hand and
became teacher and councilor and
began exposing me to his way of
life. He has taught me that our love
for each other is unconditional, and
we must accept one another for
what we are. He taught me that two
people of the same sex can love
one another with the same
commitment as heterosexuals, and
that love is as valid as anyone's.

Because of his won self assurance,
my son has taught me that I can
hold my head high and have pride
when I say "my son is gay". My
son took the time to talk to me and
explain exactly what being gay
meant to him. He answered with
honestly the most personal
questions that I would never have

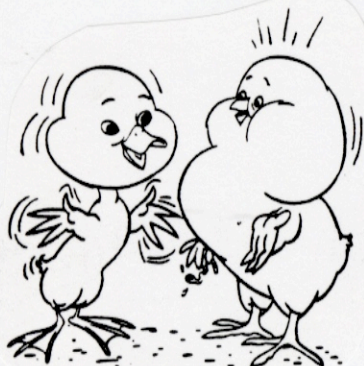


asked a heterosexual son and made me understand just how natural his life was and that I could in no way blame myself for him being gay. Because of his positive attitude, I have been able to approach other people and relay that positive attitude and help them to dispel their own deeply ingrained misconceptions about homosexuality.

Another thing I have had to learn is the fear associated with being a minority. It is hard to comprehend the sheer hatred, violence and prejudice present in the "advanced" society of ours.

I know as we come out to more family and friends that we are likely to lose some to homophobia, but if they choose to be that closed minded, I'm afraid it will be their loss (this is where the unconditional love kicks in). I know that my son has to deal with homophobic remarks on a day to day basis and sometimes it comes from his friends that don't know that he is gay. People must begin to realize and accept the fact that 1 out of 10 people they know, and this includes family and friends, are gay. Think before you speak and consider that these comments are damaging and prejudiced and if you seem to think you are not a prejudiced person, closely examine your attitude towards homosexuals. There may be one in your family.

by Joan Henderson,
A PFLAG parent.



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CANADIAN PFLAGERS

PFLAG groups across Canada continue to support each other by sharing information on organizational matters, educational materials and ideas and suggestions for advocacy. Anyone wishing to start a new PFLAG group in a town or city is welcome to contact PFLAG Edmonton for information and advice



PFLAG GREATER VICTORIA.

A most helpful and encouraging letter was received from Marjorie whose Greater Victoria group started recently with help and advice from PFLAG Vancouver. A few of her many ideas and suggestions include the following:

- * Sunday afternoon meetings to enable rural people to attend;
- * Reading of the PFLAG mission statement and confidentiality reminder at the start of each meeting;
- * A donation of \$1.00/person at regular monthly meetings to cover the cost of renting a room;
- * A permanent library at the meeting site containing books, pamphlets, videos, gay and lesbian related magazines, newsletters, events calendar, etc.
- * Speakers include members of Pink Triangle (youth group) and University students doing a project at U of Victoria;
- * Break into groups of 8 to 10 people for discussion ;
- * Close the meeting by forming a circle and doing a hand squeeze

around the circle or sending a word of peace around, etc;

* A 10 person steering committee meets once monthly to plan and to manage correspondence;

* Wrote letters to MP's, signed petitions, walked in the Gay Pride parade, helped at the information table for the UN conference on the family, met with the Youth Group to offer support, etc.

Marjorie concludes her letter with this heartfelt wish, **"I hope PFLAG groups around the world can help to lift the blanket of oppression that has kept all of us from appreciating our own and other's gifts of human sexuality".**

PFLAG New Brunswick

Eldon Hay from Sackville, NB, writes, "Yesterday, 23 Feb, I gave an address in the afternoon to priests, religious and some laity at the Catholic Information Centre (CIC), Moncton; (and) in the evening to a full house of lay people. It was a fantastic day. I had been asked to tell the story of being a parent of a gay son, which I was glad and honoured to do. (I still find it difficult to tell the story without weeping at times.)"

Eldon goes on to tell how, tongue-in-cheek, he phoned the CIC to see whether a possible new Moncton PFLAG group could hold it's meetings there (free of charge of course!) The answer from the Board was "Yes!" Several people attended this first meeting, giving hope that a permanent Moncton PFLAG group may soon be swelling the ranks of Canadian PFLAGers. A warm welcome to any Moncton PFLAGers who may be reading this article!



SASKATOON - A new PFLAG group may soon be starting in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Anyone interested in joining please contact Cindy at [REDACTED] for information and/or advice.

PFLAG BRAMPTON

It has been a delight to frequently receive educational materials from Mary and her husband, Lawrie, who are so active in advocating in Brampton. They have spoken to Roman Catholic school assemblies in Mississauga, to Roman Catholic teachers, to foster parents in Brampton, gave a workshop at high school, wrote advocacy letters and answered numerous phone calls - all this in the last three months!

Materials from the Toronto Board of Education and the City of Toronto's Public Health Department, which publishes "Sex Talk" on a monthly basis, have been particularly helpful in advancing PFLAG Edmonton's educational goals. Thankyou both and please keep sending more!

FOCUS: EDUCATION

A PLACE OF HONOR

All primitive cultures do not consider homosexuality taboo. In fact, if anything, the opposite is true. Most primitive societies regarded homosexuality as something to be revered.

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In ancient Greece, homosexuality was idealized and even promoted between older adult males and young adult males as a form of apprenticeship where the focus was not upon sexuality so much as it was upon skills and general learning that the older could impart to the younger person. Homosexuality was also accepted in ancient Rome and was also found and accepted amongst the hebrews of the Old Testament although it came to be condemned in the Judao-Christian tradition. Christ was silent on the subject. (Crooks)

Amongst North American Indian Tribes homosexuality was widely accepted and the role such individuals had in these societies is instructive.

Berdache is a term that was first used by Spanish and French explorers and applied to androgynous members of American Indian Tribes (Williams). The word originally was an Arabic and Persian term for the younger partner in a male homosexual relationship. Male Berdache were found in 150 North American societies and female Berdache were found in over 63 tribes (Roscoe, Williams). The Berdache were accepted and integrated members of their community. They were males and females who; were androgynous, meaning they had male and female characteristics. Most of them were probably homosexual although some may have been transsexual and a few even heterosexual with strong opposite sex interests. In many cases they enjoyed special respect and honors. Occasionally they were feared because of alleged supernatural powers. The Berdache had a number of key functions in their society including:

- * productive specialization such as crafts and domestic skills for males and hunting and leadership for females;
- * supernatural sanction with healing and priestly powers;
- * gender variation with distinct cross dressing for some and distinct dress for others;
- * caring for the sick, the old, and children.

The emphasis by the rest of the tribe was not on sexual behaviors but on economic attributes. Data exists that indicate that the Berdache often had partners who were same sex and therefore homosexual (Roscoe).

The Berdache of the Dakota Indians, also called Wintkes, were males who had strong associations with femininity and spirituality, were regarded as sacred people and played an important role in caring for the ill and elderly. The "Nadle" (nadleehe) of the Navajo tribes were also homosexual males who were given great respect. As some elders of the Navajo tribes have said, "If there were no nadle the country would change. They are responsible for all the wealth in the country. If there were no more left, the horses, sheep and Navajo would go. They are leaders just like President Roosevelt". (Hill)

Navajo families considered themselves fortunate if one of their children behaved androgynously and therefore might become a Nadle. Berdache have also been well described in Cheyenne, Mohave, Pueblo, Sioux, Crow and Tlingit tribes to name a few. Of interest, one of the roles that the Berdache filled was looking after children, particularly those who had lost their parents, a role in which they were very adept (Williams). As Roscoe, a cultural



anthropologist states, "Again and again one finds **Berdaches attributed with exceptional productivity, talent and originality**".

In other societies, homosexuals were and still are very accepted, in many ways fulfilling similar roles to the Berdache (*Herd*). In Hawaii androgynous persons are called "Mahu", in Samoa they are called "fa afafine" and in India "Hijras" (*Besnier, Nanda*). Homosexual behaviour in Melanesia was and still is a ritualized part of the rite of passage to manhood for young males. Every young male engages in homosexual behaviour with an older male for a period of time, and although homosexual males do exist, they are no more common than elsewhere in spite of the homosexual experiences every boy has in adolescence (*Herd*).

As Callender and Kuchems, cultural anthropologists, state the next step in Berdache studies will be the recognition that **gender diversity is not an isolated feature of North American Indian Societies but is a worldwide phenomenon represented in most cultures as well as in certain historical periods of all Western Societies**. Our ("modern") society could learn from all of this, recognizing that **individuals with a homosexual orientation have special talents and interests that should be encouraged, and not suppressed, for the benefit of all** (*Warneke*).

There is ample evidence in Western society that homosexual males and females are more than adequate parents, and there is no evidence of negative or adverse effects upon the children they raise (*Bigner, Bozelt*).

(The above article is an excerpt from a document prepared by Lorne Warneke, M.D., and

presented to the parliament of Canada in January, 1995)

FOCUS: ADVOCACY

"Silence is....

the Voice of Complicity"



SPEAKERS BUREAU

In March six of our Speakers Bureau members spoke to religious and educational groups outside the les/bi/gay community.

Within the les/bi/gay community three of our members represented PFLAG at a Primes Timers meeting and another three attended the very productive "Pink Tank" which is seeking to coordinate support, educational and advocacy efforts in the Greater Edmonton les/bi/gay community. One of our fathers attended the U of A Outreach group (formerly GAYLOC) and also wrote a "personal story" for the annual Youth Group (Pink Triangle) newspaper supplement to the Gateway. Thanks, Terry!

Many thanks to all these volunteers who so generously gave of their time from hectic schedules!

ALBERTA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION IN DEATH THROES ???

"The future of the AHRC is still very much up in the air," says

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former commissioner, Jack O'Neill. A proposal to roll it in with three other advisory boards is under consideration.

The terms of the last three chief commissioners - Fil Fraser, Raf Sayeed and most recently Jack O'Neill - were not renewed after they publicly supported equal rights for gays and lesbians. Outspoken commissioners, such as Edmonton human-rights lawyer Shirish Chotalia, have also been forced to leave sooner than they wished.

"The AHRC is moribund," says Sheila Greckol, known for her work in human rights and labor law. It's clearly underfunded. There aren't enough workers. And there's a lack of human-rights philosophy amongst the commissioners."

"The atmosphere in Alberta toward individual rights has deteriorated," says Muriel Stanley Venne. Society is less tolerant today than it was in the heady liberal aftermath of the 1960s. It's hard to believe the flagship bill of Alberta's first Conservative government was the creation of the commission, "she says.

"I am really afraid this (Klein) government doesn't understand that human rights are a birthright of the people," adds O'Neill.

The number of complaints to the commission has doubled in the last five years. More than 32,000 Albertans called the commission during the 1993-1994 year. Investigators opened 610 complaint files.

(Condensed from the Edmonton Journal, March 13, '95, p.A6.)



ITS A GAY LIFE!

APRIL & MAY 1995

"LIKE MOST COUPLES"

INTOLERANCE ADDS BURDEN

Like most couples we talk about finances, plan our careers and argue about whose turn it is to do the dishes. Our settled lives revolve around good friends, strong family and steady jobs.

We're every bit as Joe Average citizen as the married couple next door.

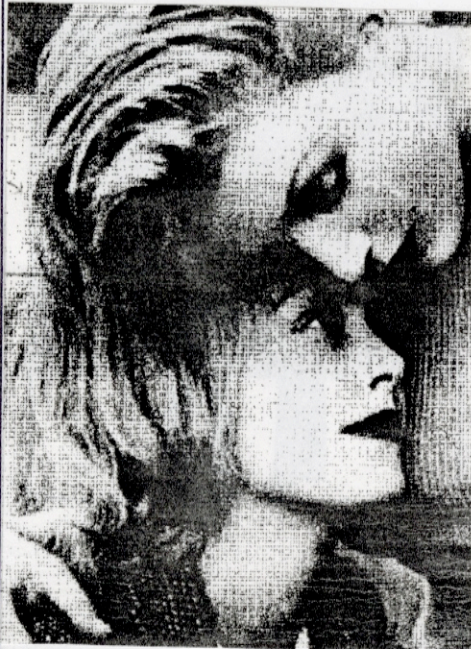
But not quite. Because loving someone of the same sex is not average and it's not something Joe Average meets with respect.

The popular image of lesbians is that of butch dykes wearing leather jackets, driving their Harleys and hating men.

But the reality is much different. We have been living together for five years. Most of the time we carefully camouflage our relationship to avoid retaliation from an anti-gay society.

What I find hard and sometimes resent is the added pressure put on our relationship because we're gay, because of the way the rest of the world looks at us and ostracizes us. In this day and age, whether you're gay or straight, it's hard work to make a relationship work and to stay committed to each other. I really resent the extra burdens of people telling me that I'm immoral and that what we have between us

is perverted. Care in camouflaging our lives means we rarely



encounter blatant or abusive discrimination, but that merely makes it harder to recognize at times.

If we were to have difficulties in our relationship, friends would pin the problem on our homosexuality and would presume that any such relationship was doomed. Some counselors and psychologists do the same, making it tough for gay partners to find help in working through the problems that any couple encounters.

Other than some extra burdens, our lives together mirror those of our straight friends and family who are

married or living together. Our relationship is also as unique and as distinct from other lesbian relationships as one heterosexual couple's is from the next.

Sex, the target and the spark for so much of the hatred that gays and lesbians face, looms no larger in our lives than in the lives of our heterosexual friends.

Gay issues are always perceived by the great majority as sexual, but sex is such a very minuscule part of who we are.

It offends me. Because I look at our relationship and I feel every bit as committed and involved and entwined as any married couple I know. It's ludicrous to label us as being diametrically opposed to other people because we're not.

by Brenda L. Smith

"Teacher's Song"

They wanted me to teach them to dance, find joy in moving

So I gave them my time and my care, I took a chance

Now you say you don't need me anymore, I can't stay here anymore

'Cause I don't live like you do, and I don't love like you do

I'm an outcast, a stranger, the children would be in danger

If there were teachers like me in the school....by Deborah Romeyn

IN REMEMBRANCE

Baron (Jomo Kenyatta) Ross

March 14, 1970 - April 5, 1995

Baron called the PFLAG helpline three years ago seeking information and came into my life like a whirlwind! Those who met him at Cindy and Dick's Christmas party will know what I mean. He was so full of life and had so much he wanted to accomplish. He felt a great affinity for the country of his origin, Trinidad, and wanted some day to go back and help his fellow man. He loved cats and while staying at my place recently he was in his glory (I have three!). When he moved to his own place he was going to have two kittens - if nothing else!

We spoke often, about many things, and I found him to be a very intelligent, spiritual, loving person. I miss him! I only hope in some way I eased the burdens he carried.

My writing pad was filled with messages we had written to each other when he stayed here. When I read them, it made me feel sad - but only for a moment because I know he is now without the pain and confusion he lived with and is in a place far beyond our dreams - a place of beauty, serenity and peace!

God Bless Baron. Love you!

Lynne

HARVARD EDUCATIONAL REVIEW

The editorial board of the *Harvard Educational Review* plans to publish a special issue on the topic of Lesbians, Gay's, Bisexuals, and Transgendered People (LGBT) in

Education. In response to the growing climate of homophobia, we hope to provide a forum that portrays the realities of LGBT students, parents, teachers, administrators, counselors, and **others with positive regard for members of those communities.** We are interested in papers exploring relevant issues such as race, gender identity, homophobia, parenting issues and policy advocacy from a theoretical, research or practice perspective. The deadline for submission is September 1, 1995:

*Harvard Educational Review,
Gutman Library Suite 349
6 Appian Way, Cambridge, MA,
02138. Ph (617) 495-3432*

EVENTS CALENDAR

VIDEO NIGHTS

Pop corn and Pop videos!
Every other Friday @ 7:30pm
For Info: Sylvia [REDACTED]

ORLANDO BOOKS

June 9, '95 @ 7:30pm
A celebration of Gay & Lesbian Awareness Month - Readings of gay and lesbian fiction - 10% of sales go to OUTREACH (formerly GAYLOC). For info: [REDACTED]

Police Liaison Committee
Townhall meeting
on Safety Issues
June 21, '95
Info: [REDACTED]

ITS A GAY LIFE! GAY PRIDE PARADE

& PICNIC

June 24, '95

Strathcona Park Gazebo

12:00 Noon

Picnic to follow **immediately after** the parade at Queen Elizabeth Park - **EVERYONE WELCOME!**

Many more PFLAG VOLUNTEERS are needed! Please phone Cindy [REDACTED] if you can join the parade - or phone Terry [REDACTED] if you can help at the picnic. Please phone as early as possible but do phone!

LIATRIS SOCIETY

* May 13 - Plant /seed exchange and pot luck supper! Please bring your own refreshments as well as food to share. We'll have an outdoor fire if weather permits. For info: Art [REDACTED]

* May 19 - 22 -Long weekend at Sir Winston Churchill Prov. Park, Lac La Biche. Info: Mark, [REDACTED] Birdwatching, wildflowers, fishing etc.

* June 3 - Kurimoto Japanese Gardens @ Devonian Botanic Gardens. Meet at DBG at 10:00, picnic lunch at noon. Info [REDACTED] Lindy.

MEDICAL ESCROW SOCIETY

* The Advance Cash Benefits program provides cash now from your life insurance coverage.

* We represent you to several benefactor groups to obtain the highest cash offer.

* Call 1-800-422-1314 for further info.